

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS FROM SIERRA LEONE -- #4

November 15, 1963

I'm still travelling around the countryside. The weekend of Oct 24-25 there was a PC party in Magburaka about 60 miles north of here. So I hopped on a lorry all by myself to go. The driver said that we would leave the lorry park at 12 noon. Well at 1:30 after three abortive leave takings, we finally left the lorry park for the fourth and last time. It only took 2½ hours to get there. The PC girl teachers there are living in ranch style houses that at home cost about \$22,000 and are very well furnished. Even Sarge Shriver commented on how they didn't fit the PC image when he was here last year. Everyone was surprised that I had ventured forth alone on a lorry and the word spread rapidly. At the party every new person I met had heard about it. Parties here are announced to begin at 9 P.M., people start arriving about 9:45, and they last until 3 to 5 A.M.

I took some good pictures of village life there. The people were very friendly and came running to have their picture taken, including one woman nursing her baby.

I opened a savings account this month. I wanted to put in 20 lbs. and keep out 30, but the bank clerk got it backwards and put in 30 lbs. My share of the house bill (food and the cook and houseboy) for the month came to 15 lbs. 5 shillings, or \$42.70. I only have 5 lbs. left for the whole month.

I have gotten Christmas presents for you all, but can't mail them in time because I don't have enough money. My cards will be late also, since they are coming by surface (only 3 cents instead of 34 cents each).

My sea freight has finally arrived. We've already had jello for dessert. British jello is terrible, but then they have odd eating habits anyway—kidney pie, etc.

The weekend after Magburaka was our midterm break—we got off on Thursday and didn't have to be back until Wednesday morning. I went to Moyamba (50 miles on the train). It only took 5½ hours. Figure out that average speed. Of course, 1½ hours of that were stops at various villages, but still! George Gatewood and I had planned to go mountain climbing, but didn't because the jeep wasn't available, and we didn't want to hike the 7 miles to the mountain and then back.

Last weekend I went to Freetown in a VW, the best ride since I got to this country. Jeeps have very loose springs. Anyone sitting in the back seat has to be wary of a concussion from hitting his head on the top. I'm serious! Saturday morning, five of us drove down the coast to the Guma Dam project. This is a huge dam being built between 2 mountains 20 miles from Freetown. When it is completed in 1965, it will supply water for Freetown in place of the unhealthy river that is the source now. The dam and reservoir will be between 100 and 125 feet tall. The work involved is fantastic—retainer dams, getting down to bedrock, putting in a water-tight bottom, and only being able to work in the dry season. A British firm is building it; and the staff was very nice about giving us a guided tour. Afterwards we went swimming to get the red laterite dust off.

There have been several changes in my teaching schedule in the past 3 weeks. The major one being I'm no longer teaching that English class of 56 kids, which improved my attitude toward this job by 50%. I'm working on getting rid of my other English class. I just can't stand that class. I don't know what I'm doing, and I don't know how to do it. I'm now teaching form II math (algebra and geometry), which I like. I'm also teaching form I handwriting (they really need it) and form II and form IV geography.

Our thief is still active. Two weeks ago he cleaned out our bathroom—everything but an empty can of toothpowder and the sink stopper. It was thoughtful of him to leave the stopper, especially since it is too small anyway. In Freetown, one tried to snatch my purse, but failed when I yelled "Tief" at the top of my lungs. You should have seen him take off.

We drove to Matru last night to get our own jeep back. The PC fellow there (Merrick Lockwood) has a monkey and a 2-year old chimpanzee. It was really cute.

I'm planning to send you a big map of the country with the road system so that you'll know where I've been. Tomorrow I'm going to Jimmi Bagbo.

The dry season is beginning and already there's a layer of red dust in the air. You have to put your lights on to see after you pass someone on the road.

P.S. Who won the Maryland-Navy game? In other words, how much did we lose by?

